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...RUBY ASKED ME,

"DO YOU THINK MAMA CRIED TOO WHEN SHE WAS HAVING A HARD TIME?"

ISN'T IT...

OBVI-OUS?

WHAT DO YOU THINK, AQUA?

...

AI DIDN'T CRY.

SHE WAS ALWAYS CARE-FREE,

AND SHE KEPT AVOIDING IMPORTANT CONVER-SATIONS.

OR AT LEAST, I PERSON-ALLY NEVER SAW HER CRY.

NOT EVEN ONCE.

HOW DO YOU INTER-PRET AI'S CHARACTER, DIRECTOR?

WHO KNOWS?

"WHO KNOWS"?

I'M NEITHER A COUNSELOR NOR A MENTAL-IST. HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO KNOW?

IF I FEEL LIKE THEY'RE COMPLETELY OFF, I CAN JUST STOP THEM AND RESHOOT.

BUT I'VE PUT IT TOGETHER IN A WAY THAT NO MATTER HOW THE ACTOR INTERPRETS OR PERFORMS IT, IT STILL WON'T FAIL.

I JUST WROTE A SCRIPT BY LISTING THE EVENTS THAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED.

SO YOU WANT ME TO THINK ABOUT IT MYSELF.

THE POINT IS, NO ONE KNOWS.

SHE'S DEAD. IT'S TOO LATE TO UNDERSTAND HER FEELINGS NOW.

A LONG TIME AGO, WHEN I FILMED A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT B-KOMACHI,

AI SAID THIS...

PLEASE FILM THE REAL ME.

IT WAS A CHALLENGE, I GUESS?

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT,

BUT I FEEL LIKE I COULDN'T CAPTURE THE REAL HER.

AND I THINK THAT SHE DID TRY TO BARE HER SOUL TO ME,

I WARNED HER THAT I'D STOP FILMING RIGHT AWAY IF SHE KEPT UP APPEARANCES,

SO THIS MOVIE IS A KIND OF REVENGE FOR ME, TOO.

THIS TIME FOR SURE,

I WANT TO FILM THE REAL AI.

I HOPE YOU CAN DO IT.

WELL, I'M MAKING THIS MOVIE WITH THE PREMISE THAT I'LL DEFINITELY DO IT.

THAT'S WHY I CHOSE RUBY FOR THE ROLE.

IF HER ACTING IS WEAK, THIS MOVIE WILL BE UNBEARABLE TO WATCH,

BUT IF SHE PERFORMS WELL, THIS MOVIE WILL SOAR.

FOR THIS VERY REASON, I NEED RUBY TO DO HER BEST, EVEN IF SHE HAS TO FORCE HERSELF TO SOME DEGREE.

"TO SOME DEGREE," EH?

I THINK IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING, BUT...

...IF YOU PUSH HER ANY MORE THAN THIS,

YOU KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN, RIGHT?

YOUR OBSESSION WITH YOUR SISTER SCARES ME...

ON WHAT GROUNDS?

BUT WELL...

I'M SURE SHE'LL BE FINE.

SHE HAS KANA ARIMA BY HER SIDE.

SHE USED TO BE...

...A SELFISH GIRL WHO ONLY ACTED IN HER OWN WAY.

YOU KNOW THAT TOO, RIGHT?

Text: Acting like a baby in baby clothes

あかちゃんは
あかんぼモード☆

SHE SPENT MOST OF HER SHORT LIFE ACTING,

LIVED IN A WORLD WHERE ACTING IS EVERYTHING,

AND LOOKED AT ALL THE ACTORS AROUND HER AS POTENTIAL ENEMIES.

SHE DIDN'T HAVE ANY COLLEAGUES OR FRIENDS HER AGE SHE COULD SHARE HER FEELINGS WITH,

AND HER PARENTS WERE LIKE... YOU KNOW...

DO YOU KNOW WHY I MATCHED YOU AGAINST ARIMA?

SO I COULD CHASTISE HER WHEN SHE GOT TOO FULL OF HERSELF?

THAT'S DEFINITELY ONE OF THE REASONS,

BUT IT'S MUCH SIMPLER THAN THAT.

I WANTED YOU TO BE HER FRIEND.

I BET SHE DIDN'T HAVE FRIENDS WITH SIMILAR VALUES OR INTERESTS AS HER.

ON TOP OF THAT, SHE HAD THAT KIND OF PERSONALITY.

MUST'VE BEEN MORE LONELY THAN WE COULD EVER IMAGINE.

BEING A KID WHO WAS DOING HER BEST IN A WORLD FULL OF ADULTS BY HERSELF...

THAT'S WHY...

WHEN I SAW HER HANGING OUT WITH THE GIRLS FROM B-KOMACHI,

I FELT SO RELIEVED.

THEY WERE QUARRELING HAPPILY WITH EACH OTHER...

...LIKE NORMAL KIDS THEIR OWN AGE.

"I'M GLAD SHE MADE FRIENDS."

BEFORE I KNEW IT,

I WAS SOUNDING LIKE AN OLD MAN.

NO MATTER WHAT HAP-PENS,

KANA ARIMA WILL DEFINITELY PROTECT RUBY HOSHINO.

SHE HAD ALWAYS WANTED...

...A FRIEND LIKE THAT, AFTER ALL.

8st.

FWIP

ARE YOU SURE THEY'LL BE FINE?

THINGS ARE LOOKING A LITTLE GRIM TO ME.

NO, UM...

OH...!

THIS IS WHAT ADOLES-CENCE IS LIKE, RIGHT?

THINGS LIKE THIS HAPPEN WITH GIRLS AROUND THEIR AGE ALL THE TIME...

RIGHT?

I HAVE NO IDEA.

LIKE THEY SAY, FIGHTS DEEPEN YOUR FRIEND-SHIPS.

THAT ONLY HAPPENS IN FICTION.

WHY ME?

HEY, AQUA...

HELP THEM SMOOTH THINGS OVER...

IN REAL LIFE, YOU WIND UP KEEPING YOUR DISTANCE AND IT'S OVER.

AREN'T YOU **WORRIED**...??

...

...AND YOU'RE **GETTING ALONG WELL** WITH ARIMA,

RUBY IS YOUR **SISTER**...

FWUMP

STAY CALM.

DON'T GET TOO FLUSTERED. YOU'RE THE PERSON IN CHARGE HERE.

THE SAME GOES FOR ARIMA. SHE'S NOT A CHILD ANY-MORE.

SHE'S GROWN UP TO BE AN ACTOR WHO CAN SEE THE BIGGER PIC-TURE.

RUBY WON'T BREAK EASILY.

EVEN IF SHE FALLS, SHE'LL TURN EVERYTHING AROUND TO HER BENE-FIT.

JUST TRUST THEM.

THEY'RE ALREADY QUITE SPLENDID IF YOU ASK ME.